

SOIL AND WATER Resources

October 2014

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Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax Benefits Missourians for 30 Years

The Soil and Water Conservation Program is unique within the country as the program has a dedicated funding source unlike any other. The program receives one-half of the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax of Missouri, approved by voters each time it has come to a vote over the past 30 years.

In 1984, 1988, 1996 and 2006 Missourians voted to support the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax, which funds activities by the department's Soil and Water Conservation Program, including Missouri's 114 soil and water conservation districts, and Missouri State Parks.

The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax has now been in place for 30 years. Over the years, soil and water conservation programs have helped Missouri landowners keep more than 175 million tons of soil from eroding into the waterways of our state.

The Soil and Water Districts Commission has responded to the growing need to address water quality issues in addition to soil erosion. Agriculture depends upon water, and it in turn, has an effect on the quality and quantity of water leaving agricultural fields. Conservation practices applied to these fields improve water infiltration, and reduce runoff and erosion.

Funding to support Missouri's 114 county soil and water conservation districts (SWCD) helps landowners with technical and financial assistance to construct traditional practices to prevent soil erosion, such as terraces, grassed waterways and ponds, and also to implement practices designed specifically to improve water quality. These erosion-control practices fight the loss of topsoil, which affects everyone - good soil is critical for food production. Properly implemented management practices, such as nutrient and pest management, and stream buffers will reduce runoff and result in improved water quality in Missouri's streams and rivers.

Changes in business efficiencies and processes within the Soil and Water Conservation Program have allowed the department to increase the funding available to landowners while improving administrative and personnel support for local soil and water conservation districts.

In fiscal 2014, the department's Soil and Water Conservation Program had \$27.7 million available from the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax available for landowner incentives. More than 60 cents of every tax dollar dedicated to soil and water conservation will be used for erosion control and protecting our water resources through implementation of conservation practices. The largest portion of the remaining funds goes to support soil and water conservation districts.

Since the initial passage of Missouri's Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax in 1984, the Department of Natural Resources has provided more than \$600 million to Missouri agricultural landowners to implement more than 210,000 conservation practices to protect the state's soil and water resources. In addition, revenues from the tax allowed Missouri to have the highest reduction in its rate of soil erosion when compared to other states with more than 10 million acres of cultivated cropland. (*Continued on Page 2*)



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(Continued from Page 1) The program staff carry out the duties set forth by Statute to provide resources to the local districts. Statute provided for the creation of the Soil and Water Districts Commission. The commission is comprised of six landowner farmers, three from north of the Missouri River and three from south of the river, and four ex-officio members. Ex-officio members are the directors of the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Conservation and the Dean of the College of Agriculture of the University of Missouri. The commission establishes policy and guidance for the districts. Program staff perform tasks at the request of the commission and under the direction of the Natural Resources department director.

The program oversees the administration of state cost-share through developing the program budget and reviewing, revising, and implementing cost-share policy and cost-share contracts to ensure they meet policy determined by the commission.

The district board of supervisors are comprised of four elected positions who are agriculture landowners from within the county and a University of Missouri Extension agent that serves as the board secretary. The districts are able to secure local funding sources and are provided grants for administration of the district and personnel to carry out district activities. Local boards oversee the district's cost-share program by hiring technical and administrative staff, approve cost-share contracts and setting the priorities for the district. Each district board can set cost-share policies more stringent than provided by the commission, and develops the district's conservation goals for submission of the Needs Assessment.

The Soil and Water Conservation Program uses resource planning annually to determine cost-share funding for all 114 districts. The conservation practices that landowners may use are defined within seven resource concerns. Each resource concern contains conservation practices best suited to reduce soil erosion or improve water quality as defined by the program's mission. The resource concerns are: animal waste management, grazing management, irrigation management, nutrient and pest management, sensitive areas, woodland erosion, and sheet, rill, and gully erosion

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The Soil and Water Conservation Program is exploring ways for the districts to participate in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), available through NRCS through submittal of an RCPP proposal and collaborating on several proposals by state partners.

RCPP is a new program created by the 2014 farm bill that uses partnerships to stretch and multiply conservation investments and reach conservation goals on a regional or watershed scale.

With the 114 soil and water conservation districts in place and funding available from the parks, soils and water sales tax, Missouri is in a strong position to coordinate and deliver high quality partnership projects if federal RCPP funding is awarded.

Final proposals were submitted by the October 2 deadline. Hopefully, districts will be able to benefit from this additional funding to help save soil and improve water quality and habitat for pollinators, wildlife and aquatic life in the state.

Fact sheets, frequently asked questions, brochures, videos and more about RCPP is available on the Soil and Water Districts Intranet at swcd.mo.gov/internal/rcpp/rcpp.htm.

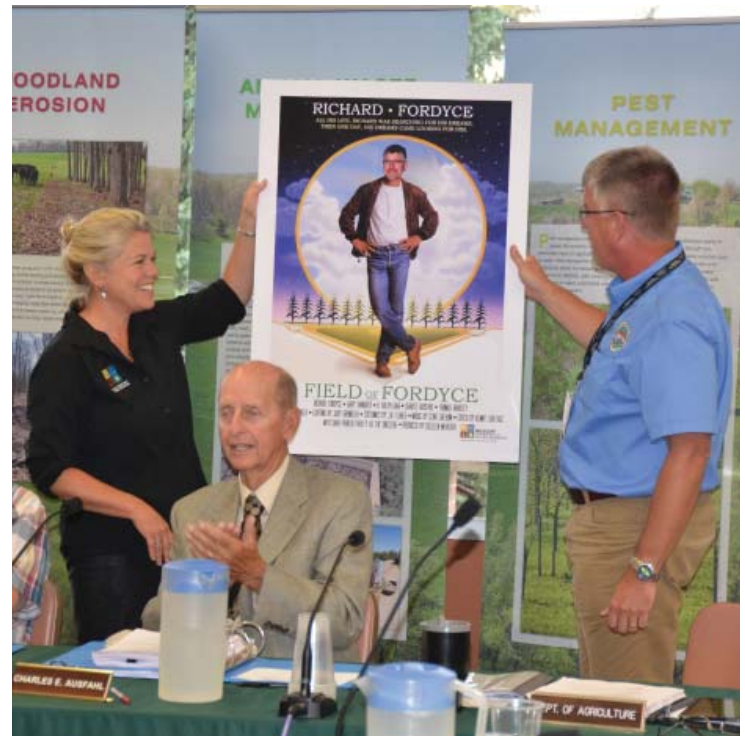
Summer Intern Program Helps Districts

Many districts took advantage of a new internship program approved by the Soil and Water Districts Commission this summer. College students gained work experience in a hands-on learning environment while mentoring with SWCD boards, staff and conservation partners. Interns helped fill the gap in the workload during the busy summer season.

State Poster Contest Deadline is Nov. 7

Posters for the state poster contest are due to the program office by Friday, Nov. 7. You can send them with your district coordinator or put them in the mail. If you have questions please contact Judy Stinson at 573-751-1783 or via email to judy.stinson@dnr.mo.gov.

Richard Fordyce recognized for SWDC service to Missouri



Missouri Department of Natural Resources director Sara Parker Pauley recognized former Soil and Water Conservation Districts Commission chair Richard Fordyce for his service to Missouri during the August 2014 commission meeting held at the Missouri State Fair. Fordyce is now the director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture.

Cost-share Allocation Update

On June 11, 2014, Gov. Nixon vetoed several bills passed by the General Assembly that contained more than a dozen special tax breaks. If all of those bills had become law, funding for parks and soil and water conservation efforts would have been reduced by an estimated \$108.5 million over the next decade.

During the veto session, the General Assembly came together in a bipartisan effort to defeat those special interest tax breaks. Based on this success and the fund's total resources, the fiscal 2015 cost-share allocations will be implemented based on full utilization of the \$31 million appropriation for cost-share.

Stakeholders Review Nutrient Reduction Strategy

Stakeholders are reviewing and preparing comments on the State's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy.

In September, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources published a draft of the State's Nutrient Reduction Strategy for public review and comments. That comment period extends through Oct. 31, 2014.

A link to the draft plan is available on the Missouri Department of Natural Resources website, where it is available both as PDF and Microsoft Word files, at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/mnrsc/index.htm.

New Cost-Share Payment Review Procedure

Cost-share expenditures are the largest expense for the Soil and Water Conservation Program. The department's internal audit staff has been assisting the program with an internal control plan to ensure appropriate emphasis is being placed on technical review of contract payments prior to approval. The goal for an intensified review is to reduce contract errors prior to payment. April Brandt and Deanna Smith have been reviewing contract payments submitted for approval. Below are items of review for contract payments.

- Landowner Authorization form completed correctly
- MoSWIMS cooperator data matches SAM II Vendor data
- EFT eligibility
- Appropriate cost-share documents are attached
- All pages of cost-share document are attached
- Proper signatures and dates on cost-share forms
- Cost-share payment amount in MoSWIMS and on signed contract payment match

Additional technical items of contract payment review include:

- Erosion data
- Field location (farm/tract/section/township/range/field number) entered in MoSWIMS matches that on Landowner Authorization form and map
- Extents installed according to policy
- Acres served according to policy
- Extents completed for components
- Components for correct usage (e.g., correct trenching/backfill component used for size of pipe)
- Field maps (if provided a submitted contract map, could staff find the completed practice?)

- Landowner name identified on map
- Locational data identified on map (could be section/township/range or coordinates)
- Field number marked where the practice is installed

Soil and Water Conservation Program staff is compiling results of this intensified payment review to evaluate against the past processes. The contract payment review could change based on the findings. Thank you for your patience with this process as we update our internal control plan and processes.

Tips for Payment Review

1. Make sure all locational data (Farm/Tract, Section/Township/Range and field number) are the same between MoSWIMS, Landowner Authorization form and Map.
2. Note anything unusual about the contract as a general note. This will help to provide clarity for questions that may arise during payment review.
3. Do not submit payment until EFT status is active. Active will be indicated by a green checkmark under EFT status (to the right of the vendor TIN number). Do not submit contract payment if EFT status indicator is red or yellow. Once the Landowner Authorization form is submitted to the Office of Administration (OA), it will take approximately 10 business days for the EFT status to become active.

Missouri State Fair Cover Crop Display



Chariton County SWC district board chairman Kenny Reichert was featured on the Soil and Water Conservation Program's cover crop at display at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia during August. The display photo was taken at the Soil Health Demonstration Farm located near Keytesville.



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SOIL AND WATER *Resources*

This publication is produced by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources Soil and Water Conservation Program. Funds for this publication are provided by Missouri's parks, soils and water sales tax.

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